

Message Text

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FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG

TO USIA WASHDC

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USLO PEKING

UNCLAS HONG KONG 5909

E.O. 11652: N/A

SUBJECT: REPORT ON MARINES DEPARTURE

FOLLOWING "U.S. MARINES TO LEAVE PEKING," FRONT-PAGED TODAY'S

SOUTH CHINA MORNING POST:

1. QUOTE. FIVE U.S. MARINES NOW GUARDING THE USLO IN PEKING ARE TO LEAVE SOON AT THE REQUEST OF THE CHINESE AUTHORITIES, REUTER'S JONATHAN SHARP REPORTED FROM THE CHINESE CAPITAL, QUOTING AMERICAN SOURCES.

2. THEY ARE TO BE REPLACED BY CIVILIAN GUARDS.

3. THE SOURCES SAID THE CHINESE ASKED THAT THE MARINES LEAVE BECAUSE 'THEY ARE THE ONLY RECOGNIZABLE FOREIGN MILITARY UNIT IN CHINA.'

3. HOWEVER, THE MARINES ARE GENERALLY UNARMED AND WEAR CIVILIAN CLOTHES EXCEPT FOR A FEW CEREMONIAL OCCASIONS SUCH AS WHEN THE AMERICAN FLAG WAS FIRST RAISED OUTSIDE THE LIAISON OFFICE LAST YEAR.

4. AFP'S RENE FLIPO QUOTED OBSERVES AS RECALLING THAT WHEN THE

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LIAISON OFFICE WAS OPENED, THE CHINESE ALREADY OBJECTED TO THE

MARINES WEARING THEIR USUAL UNIFORM.

5. AS A RESULT, THEY STOOD GUARD IN CIVILIAN CLOTHES, BUT IT IS BELIEVED THAT THE CHINESE AUTHORITIES FROWNED AT THEIR EVEN STRAPPING ON A PISTOL WHILE ON DUTY.

6. SHARP ALSO REPORTED THERE HAD BEEN STRONG HINTS IN THE PAST MONTHS THAT THE CHINESE WERE UNHAPPY OVER THE MARINE PRESENCE, DESPITE THE FACT THAT PEKING ORIGINALLY CONSENTED TO THEIR BEING STATIONED IN PEKING.

7. ONE BONE OF CONTENTION WAS THE MARINES' INFORMAL CLUB, CALLED 'THE RED ASS SALOON,' WHICH QUICKLY BECAME A FOCUS FOR YOUNGER PEOPLE IN THE FOREIGN COMMUNITY STARVED OF ENTERTAINMENT IN PURITAN PEKING.

8. THE CHINESE COMPLAINED OF TOO MUCH NOISE AND SAID IT WAS ILLEGAL TO SELL LIQUOR IN NON-DIPLOMATIC PREMISES. THE CLUB WAS SUBSEQUENTLY CLOSED.

9. THE MOVE IS SEEN AS A SNUB TO THE AMERICANS, SINCE IT IS TRADITIONAL FOR MARINES TO GUARD AMERICAN MISSIONS ABROAD, SHARP WROTE.

10. THE MARINES - MOST OF THEM IN THEIR TWENTIES AND ALL BACHELORS - WHO WILL LEAVE IN THE NEXT TWO OR THREE WEEKS, ARE AMONG THE SIX WHO WERE SENT TO PEKING IN APRIL LAST YEAR WHEN MR. ALFRED JENKINS, THE NO 2 MAN, SET UP A TEMPORARY OFFICE IN PEKING. ONE OF THEM RETURNED TO THE U.S. ABOUT TWO MONTHS AGO.

11. MOST OF THE MARINES STATIONED IN PEKING ARE BELIEVED TO HAVE SPENT SHORT HOLIDAYS IN HONG KONG DURING THEIR YEAR'S DUTY IN THE CHINESE CAPITAL. UNQUOTE
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